

# Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T 506

Magi No. 2105065633

DOE ☐ yes ☒ noChesapeake Bay Sailing Log Canoe Fleet Thematic Group

## 1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic MAGICand/or common log canoe

## 2. Location

street & number St. Michaels Marina West Harbor Road n/a ☐ not for publicationcity, town St. Michaels n/a ☐ vicinity of First congressional districtstate Maryland 024 county Talbot 041

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name James H. Wilsonstreet & number P.O. Box 268 (Radcliffe Ave.) telephone no.: 745-2695city, town St. Michaels state and zip code Maryland 21663

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. n/a liberstreet & number foliocity, town state

## 6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Maryland Historical Trust Historic Sites Inventorydate 1984 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ localdepository for survey records 21 State Circlecity, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

## 7. Description

Survey No. T-506

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☒ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

MAGIC is a sailing log canoe in the racing fleet. Built on St. Mary's Square in St. Michaels, Maryland in 1894 by Charles Tarr, the canoe measures 34' 3-5/8" long with a beam of 6'11". She has a longhead bow and a raking sharp stern. Log-built, she has a lapped sheer strake topped with a rubrail. The boat is privately owned and has been raced by members of the same family since 1925. She has a white-painted hull, fiberglassed over, and varnished washboards and spars, with a white bowsprit and a long bumpkin.

The canoe shows typical Tilghman-style 5-log construction in the hull, with a lapped uppermost (sheer) strake and rubrail. Strip-planked washboards form a peapod-shaped cockpit, lined with a varnished coaming and topped with short cleat railings amidships. There are solid stern sheets beneath the washboards at the stern and a wooden centerboard trunk placed well forward. There is a straight, raking bow with a small longhead and a sharp, raking stern, on which the rudder is hung outboard on pintles. A long bumpkin, painted white, overhangs the stern. The canoe carries moveable springboards for racing.

The rig consists of two adjustable masts whose angle can be changed using wooden chocks. The masts are set into thwarts and mast steps in a "square" system. The mainmast, 47 1/2' long, is unstayed. The foremast, 34' long, is set up with two shrouds and spreaders set well down the mast. A forestay leads to the end of the bowsprit, which is set up with heavy standing rigging--a wire bobstay and two wire bowsprit shrouds. Foresail and mainsail are clubbed and have sprits; they are dacron sails locally made by Ellison. The canoe also carries a large jib and various light racing sails.

The canoe's hull is painted white, with blackish-green bottom paint and a racing stripe above the waterline. The name MAGIC is painted in large script gilt letters directly on the hull. The longhead is decorated with two parallel sets of striped beading, white with dark red accents, rather than trailboards. The washboards are highly varnished, as are the centerboard and spars except for the bowsprit, which is white.

## 8. Significance

Survey No. T-506

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1894 Builder/Architect Charles Tarr

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☒ B ☒ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☒ none

Level of Significance: ☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the last surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay racing log canoes that carry on a tradition of racing on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has existed since the 1840's. In addition, it is a surviving representative of the oldest indigenous type of boat on the Bay--the working log canoe--which was developed in the 17th century by early European settlers from the aboriginal dugout canoe.

Used for transportation and for harvesting the rich bounty of the Bay, log canoes changed little over the centuries. Constructed of from two to seven logs and ranging in length from 20 to 35 feet, they were rigged with one or two sharp-headed spritsails with or without a jib set on raking, unstayed pole masts. Easily and cheaply constructed, some 6300 existed in Bay waters in the 1880s. The working canoes first began to be raced in 1840 and by the 1870s area boatbuilders were building canoes specifically for racing, with lighter, thinner hulls and sharper lines. As mast heights increased to increase sail area the canoes became inherently unstable, necessitating the use of springboards and human ballast. Also part of the racing rig is the outrigger added for balance and to enable the sail tender to sit beyond the overlarge mainsail.

With the invention of the gasoline engine many log canoes were converted to power for oystering, but were then converted back to sail as interest in racing waxed and waned over the years. After peak years of popularity in the 1880s and 1890s, interest in log canoe racing waned in the first two decades of the 20th century only to be revived again in the 1920s. The popularity of racing, spearheaded by the Miles River Yacht Club, continued unabated until the present day, although the number of vessels active in the fleet has varied considerably.

MAGIC is significant for being one of the older surviving canoes, having been built in the peak popularity years of the 1890s by Charles Tarr, a noted builder of the period. In the early years of this century MAGIC was converted to power and served as a commercial oystering vessel until 1924 when she was bought by George H. Wilson and returned to her sailing rig. After her conversion MAGIC proved to be one of the fastest canoes on the Bay, winning the first Governor's Cup race in 1927 and, in the years since, winning it more times than any other canoe. She is still owned and raced by the same family--the Wilson's--who acquired and restored her in 1924. Because of her successful racing career MAGIC is one of the better known of the log canoes. Her lines and dimensions were published in Yachting Magazine in 1934 and photographs of her by Aubrey Bodine have been published in the Sunpapers.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

T-506

Brewington, Marion V., Chesapeake Bay Log Canoes and Bugeyes (Cambridge, Md.: Cornell Maritime Press, 1963)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name St. Michaels, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 18 394020 4293410  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

Verbal boundary description and justification

The historic boundary of this movable vessel is co-terminous with the hull. The vessel is usually stored at the location indicated in Item 2.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state n/a code county code

state code county code

## 1. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty and Dr. Mary Ellen Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society

date May 1984

street & number 201 West Monument Street

telephone (301) 685-3750

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
Shaw House  
21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 269-2438

T-506

MAGIC (log canoe)

St. Michaels, Maryland

MAGIC is a 34' 3-5/8" sailing log canoe in the racing fleet. She is log-built with a beam of 6'11," a longhead bow, raking sharp stern, and a lapped sheer strake with a rubrail. Her sailing rig consists of two adjustable masts-- a mainmast 47 1/2' long and a foremast 34' long. Built in 1894 by Charles Tarr in St. Michaels, Maryland, MAGIC gains her significance for being one of the last 22 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay racing log canoes that carry on a tradition of racing on the Eastern Shore of Maryland that has existed since the 1840's. MAGIC is of special importance for being one of the older surviving canoes and for having been built by one of the most noted builders of the period of peak popularity of canoe racing in the 1890s.

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☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
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### Check one

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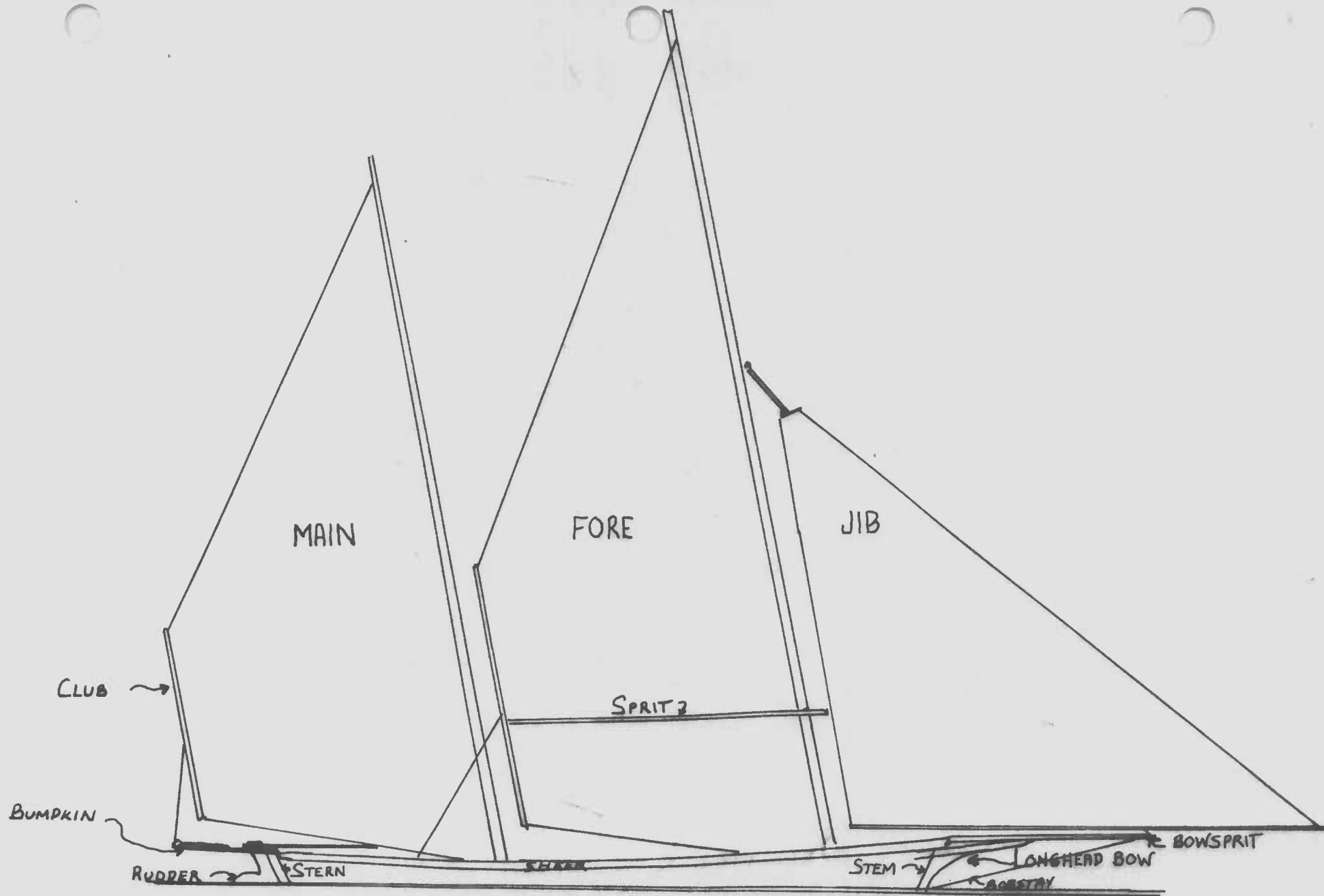
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SAIL PLAN OF TILGHMAN ISLAND CANOE after drawing by J.G. Earle

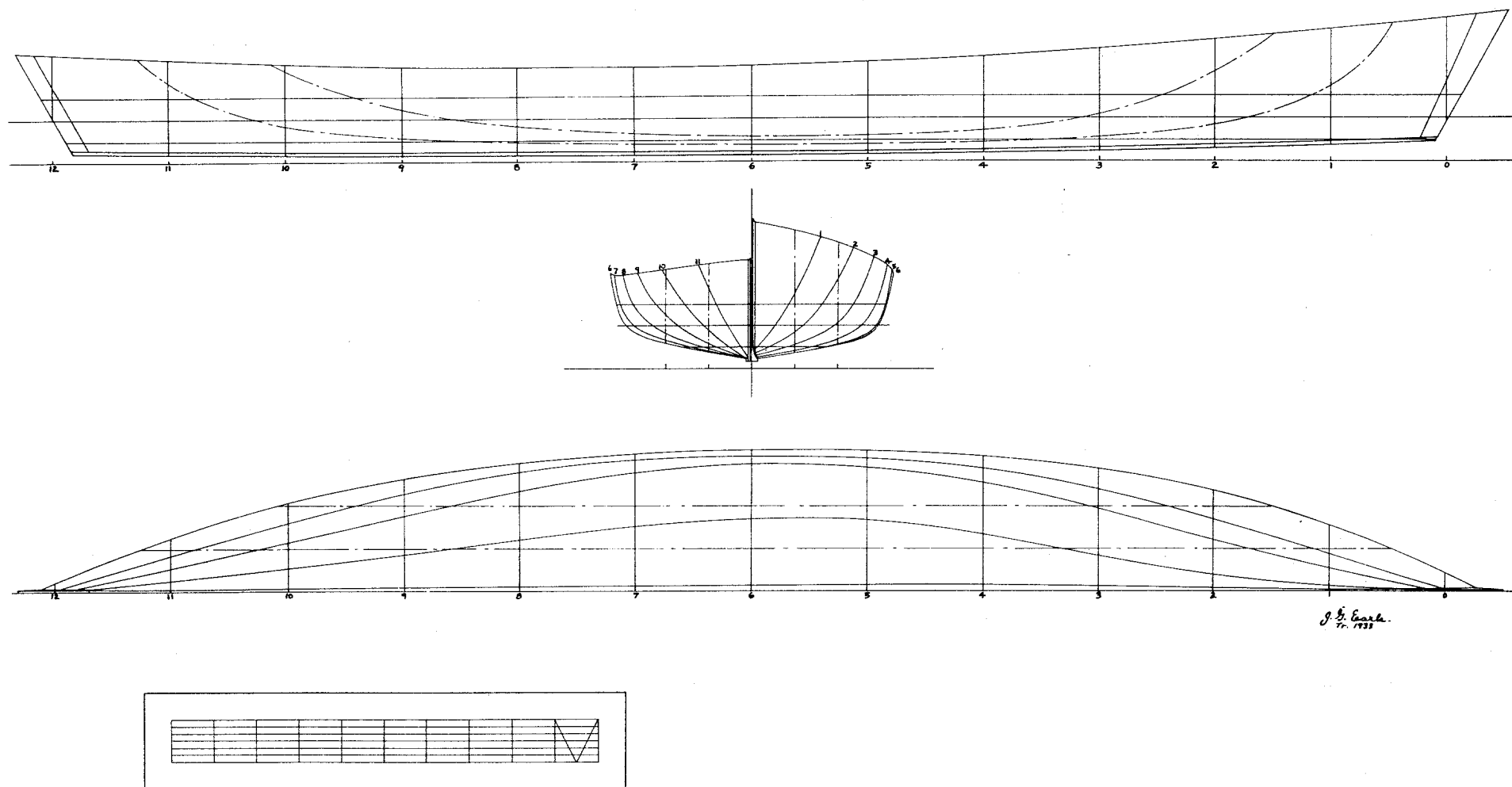


PLATE VIII A. LINES OF TILGHMAN ISLAND CANOE, *Magic*.

Built by Charles Tarr, St. Michaels, Md., 1894. Drawings by John G. Earle.

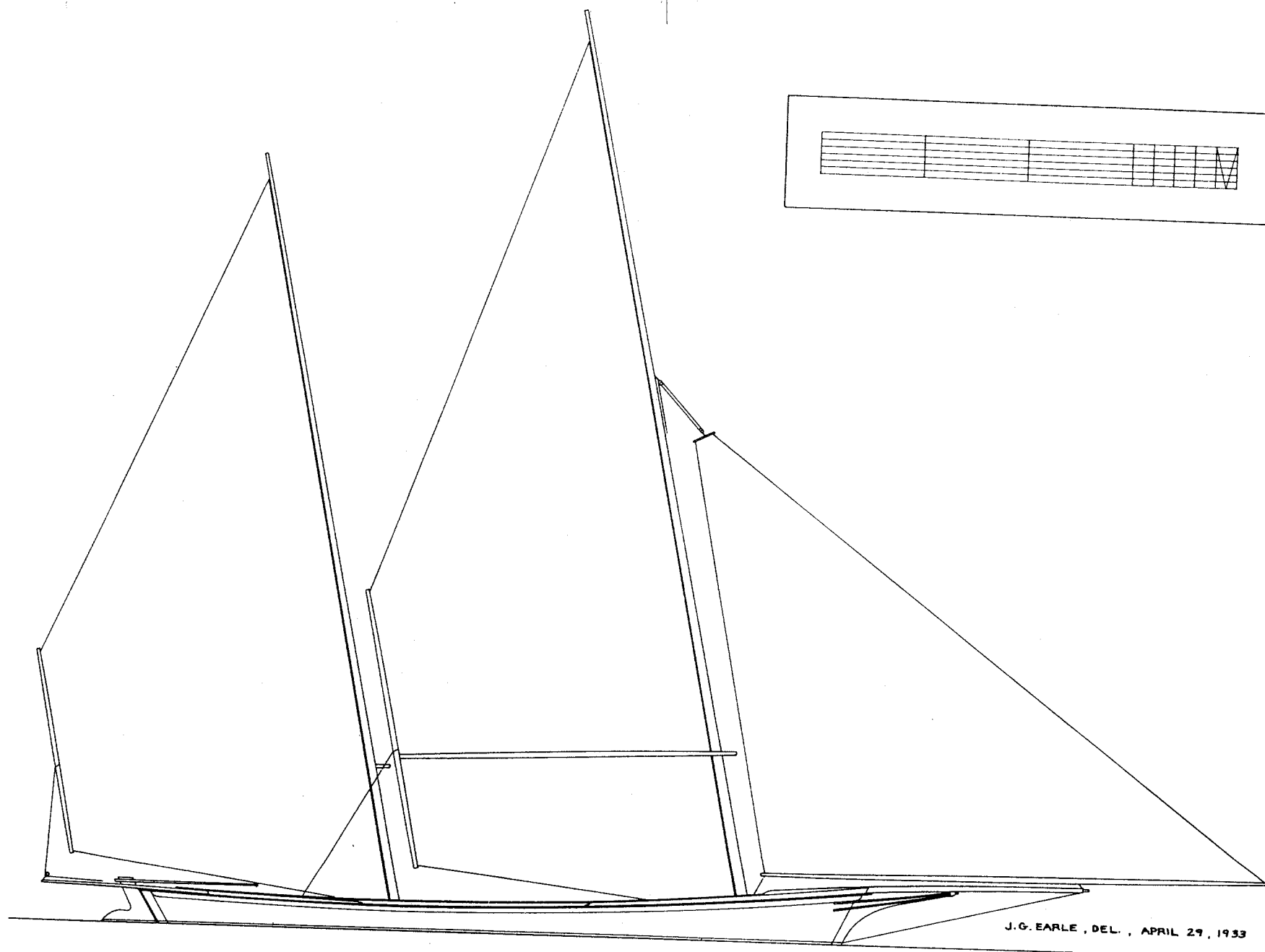


PLATE VIII B. SAIL PLAN OF TILGHMAN ISLAND CANOE, *Magic*.  
Built by Charles Tarr, St. Michaels, Md., 1894. Drawings by John G. Earle.



T-506

MAGIC

St. Michaels, Md

port bow

M. C. Wootton      10/83



T-506

MAGIC

St. Michaels, Md

Port side, under sail

A.E. Witty 7/84





T-506

MAGIC

St. Michaels, Md

port stern

M. C. Wootton 10/83



T-506

MAGIC

St. Michaels, Md

bow

M. C. Wootton 10/83